7 August 2000
English
Original: French

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2000

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Peter **Van De Velde** (Belgium)

I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

A. Matters related to and inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar for 2000

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 54/248 of 23 December 1999, approved the draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for the biennium 2000-2001 as submitted by the Committee on Conferences and amended by subsequent decisions taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. The approved calendar was issued as document A/AC.172/2000/2.

2. At its 373rd meeting, on 26 August 1994, the Committee had decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee should, in future, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

3. At its 379th meeting, on 23 March 1995, the Committee had agreed that proposed changes to the calendar that did not have programme budget implications could be dealt with by the Secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee.

4. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee had decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee that involved a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involved other types of changes should, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

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5. The requests submitted in 2000 for changes of venue or additional sessions and the action taken by the Committee are shown below.

Organ: International Civil Service Commission

Request: To convene its fifty-first session, from 3 to 20 April 2000, in Vienna rather than New York, since the International Atomic Energy Agency had agreed to host the session at the Vienna International Centre. The Commission had originally scheduled two sessions in New York in 2000, in April and July. Section I, paragraph 4 (g), of General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985 provides that, if more than one session is required in any one year, the Commission may accept an invitation from one of its participating organizations to hold its other session at the headquarters of that organization.

Action taken: Request approved.

Organ: United Nations Environment Programme

Request: To convene a sixth special session of its Governing Council, from 29 to 31 May 2000 at Malmö, Sweden, pursuant to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 53/242, in which the Assembly welcomes the proposal for a global environmental forum taking the form of a special session of the Governing Council in years in which the Council does not meet in regular session. The choice of venue is consistent with section I, paragraph 5, of Assembly resolution 40/243, since the Government of Sweden has agreed to defray the costs of the special session.

Action taken: Decision of the Governing Council noted.

Organ: Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters

Request: To convene its thirty-fifth session, from 5 to 7 July 2000, at Geneva rather than New York in order to give members an opportunity to confer with participants in the Conference on Disarmament. Moreover, since the Board also serves as Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Geneva venue permits Board members to be in close contact with the staff of the Institute.

Action taken: Request approved.

Organ: Commission on the Status of Women

Request: To convene a one-day resumed session to hold an election to replace the resigning Chairman and to adopt the recommendations for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

Action taken: Request approved.

Organ:	Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world"
Request:	To convene a resumed session, to be held in June 2000, in order to formalize the results of informal consultations on the draft text of the main outcome document for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.
Action taken:	Request approved.

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I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

B. Adoption of the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2001

Introduction and overview

1. At its 429th meeting, on 7 August 2000, the Committee on Conferences reviewed the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2001 (A/AC.172/2000/CRP.1 and Add.1).

2. The Committee also heard an oral report on the subject from the representative of the Secretariat.

Discussion

3. Concern was expressed at the hardship imposed on small delegations when important meetings were scheduled close to each other with little time for delegates to rest and prepare for the meeting of the next body. The representative of the Secretariat acknowledged that various constraints during 2000 had necessitated the scheduling of sessions of related intergovernmental bodies close to each other. Every effort would be made in the year ahead to avoid the recurrence of such situations through better coordination and more careful advance planning.

4. Clarification was sought and received from the Secretariat regarding, inter alia, the meetings of various organs of the United Nations for 2001.

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Conclusions and recommendations

5. The Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it:

(a) Adopt the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2001, taking into account the various observations of the Committee;

(b) Authorize the Committee to make adjustments to the calendar of conferences and meetings for 2001 that might become necessary as a result of actions and decisions taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

6. The Committee noted with satisfaction that, in drafting of the revised 2001 calendar of conferences, the Secretariat had taken into account the arrangements referred to in General Assembly resolution 54/248, section A, paragraph 6, with regard to Id al-Adha, which falls on 5 March 2001, and Id al-Fitr, which falls on 16 December 2001 (to be observed on 17 December), and section A, paragraph 7, of the same resolution, concerning Orthodox Good Friday, which falls on 13 April 2001.

7. The Committee recommended that, when planning the calendar of conferences and meetings, every effort should be made to avoid simultaneous peak periods at the various duty stations and welcomed the efforts that were being made to promote more effective coordination with a view to achieving that objective.

8. The Committee requested the Secretariat to avoid scheduling meetings of intergovernmental bodies, such as the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Fifth Committee, too closely to each other.

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I. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

1. Meeting statistics of United Nations organs; consultations with or letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

Introduction and overview

1. Since 1983, the Committee on Conferences has studied a series of reports containing the meeting statistics and, in more recent years, the documentation statistics of a core sample of United Nations organs in New York, Geneva and Vienna. Statistics on bodies meeting in Nairobi have been included since 1998.

2. At its 429th meeting, on 7 August, the Committee reviewed the report of the Secretary-General on meeting statistics of United Nations organs that had met in 1999 (A/AC.172/2000/3/Rev.1).

3. In section B, paragraph 6, of its resolution 54/248 of 23 December 1999, the General Assembly reiterated its request to the Committee on Conferences to continue to consult with those bodies that consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources.

4. In paragraph 7 of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences to transmit a letter to the chairpersons of all bodies that had utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (80 per cent) of their allocated conference resources in the previous year, informing them of the problem and drawing their attention to the significant loss of meeting

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time, with a view to encouraging appropriate action on their part so as to improve the utilization of conference-servicing resources.

5. At the same meeting, the Committee considered an oral report made by the Chairperson on the actions taken pursuant to the requests set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 above.

Discussion

6. The view was expressed that the Secretariat should continue its efforts to ensure that unutilized conference resources were reallocated by sensitizing the chairpersons of intergovernmental bodies to the need to consistently utilize the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated resources. The Committee discussed a number of ways in which this goal could be accomplished. These included eliminating, as far as possible, avoidable cancellations of meetings; convening meetings in a timely manner, without a quorum, if necessary; scheduling, to the extent possible, informal consultations with interpretation services; cancelling scheduled meetings in advance, particularly if no delegation expresses a wish to speak, and holding working groups in their place; if time remains at the end of a scheduled meeting, considering other items or holding informal consultations; and making efforts to improve the accuracy with which the number of fully serviced meetings required is forecast. It was also suggested that chairpersons should institute time limits for the presentation of standard documents by the Secretariat.

7. It was acknowledged, however, that the working methods of committees varied significantly and that, in some cases, such as that of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the volume of work and documentation was so high that it was mandatory to use time available to review documentation, prepare for upcoming items and review the Committee's own draft report on an ongoing basis. Any approach to the problem should take account of such constraints.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee took note with appreciation that the overall utilization factor for 1999 was 81 per cent, exceeding the benchmark of 80 per cent, and that the decrease of one and four percentage points in Vienna and Geneva respectively was offset by a two-percentage-point gain in New York.

9. It noted, however, that in 1999 only 59 per cent of the bodies in the sample utilized 80 per cent or more of their available conference-servicing resources and expressed its continuing concern at the low rate of compliance.

10. The Committee took note of the oral report by the Chairperson on the actions taken pursuant to the requests of the General Assembly set out in section B, paragraphs 6 and 7, of its resolution 54/248 concerning utilization of conference services and requested the Chairperson to continue to consult on its behalf with the chairpersons of bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources.

11. The Committee noted with appreciation the new format for the report of the Secretary-General, which clearly indicated which bodies had made effective

use of their conference resources and which had underutilized the resources allocated to them.

12. The Committee welcomed the incorporation of the statistics for Nairobi in the analytical tables contained in the report.